DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 157 966 UD 018 495

AUTHOR Oatis, Bobbie N.
TITLE Racism: How Shall We as Administrators Work for a Smooth Transition?
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Admission Criteria; *Bias; *Blacks; Equal Education; *Higher Education; *Racism

ABSTRACT

This is a speech by the Dean of Student Affairs for Women at Jackson State University on the subject of racism in higher education. The bias against blacks in testing and admission procedures is mentioned. The need for administrators to confront and remove their own biased racial attitudes, and to develop an atmosphere for equal opportunity and cultural pride is stressed. (GC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Bobbie N. Oatis

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Bobbie N. Oatis
Dean of Student Affairs for Women
Jackson State University

JUL 31 1978

ED157966

Madam Chairperson, Members of the University Section NAWDAC, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Racism: How Shall We as Administrators Work for a Smooth Transition?

Time does not permit the coverage of the whole spectrum of America's racism. Therefore, I shall briefly present the issue as related to Institutions of Higher Learning.

> "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

These words which are inscribed on the Statue of Liberty express the American tempo as we welcome all races to these shores.

And so, people came to America from all the continents: The Italians, Irish, Africans, Spaniards, French, Serbian and many others. By the way, I enjoyed the singing of the Serbian group last evening. However, Detroit is known for the Motown sound and one would think that in planning such a program, a liberal organization such as NAWDAC would have been sensitive to this and, also, included representatives from this segment of our society on the program. Two groups had quite a unique position in settling America: the Africans who were brought to a land of freedom under bondage and for servitude and native Americans who were forced to give up most of their valuable land for this yearning of freedom of others.

CG018495

One can readily see that from the beginning there was a conflict between the American philosophy of purpose and America's practice.

For years, America ignored how the other half lived and bragged that we were a melting pot of nations. The conflicts of American citizens through the years and the eruption of racial volcanoes in the 50's and 60's made

America admit that many things in the melting pot were not soluble.

Since the American philosophy is basically good, through out system of justice we proceeded to correct the ills of our society. Citizens: Black, White, Jews and Gentiles, Protestant and Catholics banded together and dedicated their time, monies, and lives in order for all American people to achieve the national dream. One by one the walls of injustice were tumbled.

Among these walls was the doctrine of "Separate-but-equal." Statistics relative to the distortion of this ruling are staggering. For example, the Mississippi State Department of Education furnished the following statistics relative to the allocation of funds for education for the Black and White child.

> In 1950-51, $38.10 per year was spent on a Black child, $231.91 was spent on the White child, a difference of $193.81. In 1959-60, $144.09 was spent on the Black child, $231.91 was spent on the White child, a difference of $87.82. And, in 1961-63, $184.14 was spent on the Black child, $265.97 was spent on the White child, a difference of $81.83.

Mississippi was not the only state which allocated funds in this manner, an example from this state is used only because it is my home state. I still, in 1978, observe some discrepancy in the allocation of funds and the approving of new programs as related to historically Black and White institutions. Past history, however, gives me the courage to say that like the separate but equal doctrine, "this too shall past."

The situation the "separate-but-equal doctrine" brought about prove to be much like this story of Rabbit Stew. It is said that a traveling salesperson who had served in the U.S. Army during World War II and had eaten mule meat, stopped off at a restaurant and ordered some rabbit stew. When she tasted it, she recognized it as being mule stew. She called to the

to the manager and complained that, "This isn't rabbit stew, its mule stew, whereupon, the manager politely explained, "Madam, may I assure you that although it may taste like mule stew, it has just as much right to be rabbit, because every time we put in a mule we put in a rabbit." And so it was the majority got the mule and minority got the rabbit.

The 1954 ruling of the land marked case of Brown vs the Board of Education tumbled the walls of the "separate-but-equal doctrine." Intergration of our educational systems with "all deliberate speed," became the order of the land.

This decision and its aftermath opened the doors of Institutions of Higher Education to a new student who was both physically and culturally different from any that most educational personnel had worked with prior to this time. Patricia Cross in an article, "New Roles for Deans and Counselors," which appeared in the Journal of the National Association of Women Deans and Counselors, Fall, 1972, explains it this way, "There are four primary groups of people who are being brought into the educational mainstream under pressures for egalitariansim, those who have suffered discrimination with respect to race, sex, age, or academic ability," the problems are different for each of these groups.

Further, she explained that "The new student is the largest of these groups numerically and consists of students who, for a variety of reasons, have poor records of academic achievement. Two-thirds of these students are first-generation college students. Although some are third world students, they are predominantly the white children of blue-collar workers."

In this same article, counselors and deans were admonished to become accountable by placing performance above brute strength and power as a means of assuring the survival of our positions. These new students,

these minorities, offer the challenge for our very survival while at the same time gives us the opportunity to contribute to the American's cause. It is very easy to offer programs to students who fit our peg board of training, but what about those students who are not squared or rounded?

A few days before coming here I carried my car, after having bent a fender, to a noted mechanic whose shop walls were covered with pictures of before and after wrecked cars. In each case, a picture of a badly bent car was exhibited next to the picture of the car after repair. It was amazing to see how these wrecks had been restored to a like-new product. During a check-up at my dentist a film showing the dentist at work was shown. It showed the dentist restoring teeth to their original luster, straightening crooked ones and repairing decaying ones. In each of these situations a sense of professional pride was shown in work and results of service which they could offer. We, like dentists and mechanics must strive with the same enthusiasm and professionalism to be accountable in our production. Before we can successfully work with these new students, we must:

1. Examine ourselves and remove any bias and/or prejudices we may have.

2. Address ourselves to aiding our institutions in changing to accommodate new learning needs and desires present by these groups.

3. Create environment modifications where such environments contribute to stress in students. Those of us in student personnel are going to have to be vigilant in working toward redesigning the environment so that educational casualties are minimized. Special programs in human relationship and sensitivity training should be a part of every campus program.

4. Develop and provide programs in study and academic skills.

5. Put forth special effort to insure attendance at cultural events on the campus as well as in the community.

6. Because of cultural difference, learn to look beyond tests for clues of capabilities.

Robert Shrum, in an article, "The Hidden Issue of Bakke," which appeared in the March, 1978 issue of Forum, cites David White of Berkeley's Childhood and Government Project, a leading authority on test bias and co-author of the Association's brief, who said, "There is a wealth of evidence to choose from proving the invalidity of the MCAT," the national multiple-choice test for medical school applicants."

Further, the article states that in a recent survey of students who took the MCAT, White reports, 61 percent agreed that its content is oriented toward white middle-class culture." The mean score of blacks on the test is 120 points lower than that of whites. Does this mean that blacks will do less well in medical school? Studies at Harvard and the University of California-San Francisco have shown virtually no relationship between MCAT scores and medical school grades. What's more, according to White, studies of interns and of doctors in practice have found a negative correlation between MCAT scores and performance in clinical situations. The Black Law Student Association at the same institution brief concludes: "If an admissions committee were to follow literally the implications of studies relating MCAT scores to physician performance, it should prefer candiates with lower scores."

The article continues by explaining that medical schools themselves recognize the limits of the MCAT. Interviews play a heavy role in admission

decisions; so does age. Allan Bakke was 32 when he first applied to Davis' Medical School. He had higher test scores and grades than the average white students who were admitted. Bakke was also rejected by 11 other medical schools, all of which tended to accept applicants with high MCAT's high grades, and low ages. In other words, even if there had been no special admissions, Bakke probably still would not have made it into any medical school. He simply is not, as the popular image now has him, a superbly talented white, displaced just to make room for a marginal black.

7. Concerted efforts must be made towards increasing enrollment and retention of different racial groups which has been statistically declining and which has never been balanced with the population segment.

According to the Yearbook of Higher Education 1977-78 Edition, there are presently 6,227,796 full time undergraduate, graduate, and professional students enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education. Of this number 34,692 or 0.6 percent are American Indians, 539,500 or 8.7 percent are Black, 73,527 or 1.2 percent are Asia American; 167,417 or 2.7 percent are Spanish Surnamed Americans, 5,412,60 or 86.8 percent are White.

Please know that these figures represent an increase in enrollment of minorities-but not nearly enough!

When we count all students enrolled in school, we come up with a total of 11.2 million and this is expected to increase to 13.4 million by 1985. With Higher Education being the seed bed of our nation, we hold in our hands the opportunity to bind diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and political division into a healthy whole so that people may live creatively in a complex, changing, and at times depersonalized society.

We can not look to the Mayor, the President and the Legislature to do all the work for our nation. We can help them by creating a citizenry capable of promoting world order which provides not only for survival but, also, for meaningful freedom and dignity.